Reputation and Rumours

As someone who has acquired a particular (in my view, unwarranted) reputation regarding a particular matter, and been the subject of various rumours in respect of that matter and various other matters, I am rather reminded of a certain passage of *De Consolatione Philosophiæ* by Boethius:

> Plures enim magnum saepe nomen falsis vulgi opinionibus abstulerunt; quo quid turpius excogitari potest? [1]

Furthermore, and interestingly, in Chaucer's translation of Boethius that sentence leads on to one of the first recorded usages, in the English language, of the word rumour:

> For manye han had ful greet
> renoun by the false opinioun of the poeple, and what thing
> may ben thought fouler than swiche preysinge? For thilke folk
> that ben preysed falsly, they moten nedes han shame of hir
> preysinges. And yif that folk han geten hem thonk or preysinge
> by hir desertes, what thing hath thilke prys eched or
> encresed to the conscience of wyse folk, that mesuren hir good,
> nat by the rumour of the poeple, but by the soothfastnesse of
> conscience? And yif it seme a fair thing, a man to han
> encresed and spred his name, than folweth it that it is demed
> to ben a foul thing, yif it ne be y-sprad and encresed.
>
> Book III, vi, vv. 5-15. (Early English Text Society, 1868) [2]

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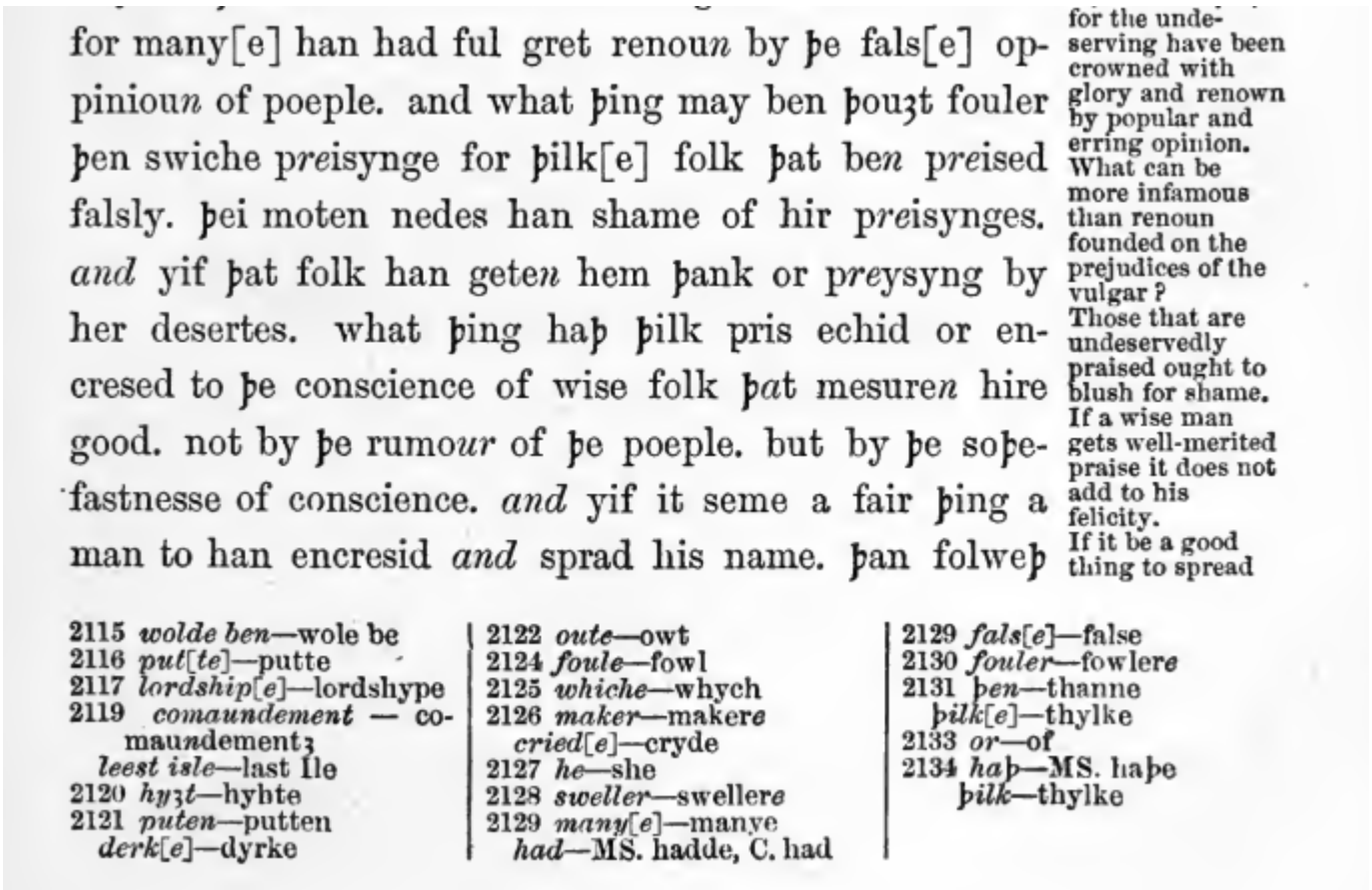
1. Gloria uero quam fallax saepe, quam turpis est! Vnde non iniuria tragicus exclamat:

> ὦ δόξα δόξα μυρίοισι δὴ βροτῶν
> οὐδὲν γεγῶσι βίοτον ὤγκωσας μέγαν.

Plures enim magnum saepe nomen falsis uulgi opinionibus abstulerunt; quo quid turpius excogitari potest?

2.



for many[e] han had ful gret renoun by þe fals[e] opinioun of poeple. and what þing may ben þouȝt fouler þen swiche preisynge for þilk[e] folk þat ben preised falsly. þei moten nedes han shame of hir preisynges. and yif þat folk han geten hem þank or preysyng by her desertes. what þing haþ þilk pris echid or encresed to þe conscience of wise folk þat mesuren hire good. not by þe rumour of þe poeple. but by þe soþefastnesse of conscience. and yif it seme a fair þing a man to han encresid and sprad his name. þan folweþ

for the undeserving have been crowned with glory and renown by popular and erring opinion. What can be more infamous than renoun founded on the prejudices of the vulgar? Those that are undeservedly praised ought to blush for shame. If a wise man gets well-merited praise it does not add to his felicity. If it be a good thing to spread

2115 *wolde ben*—wole be
2116 *put[te]*—putte
2117 *lordship[e]*—lordshype
2119 *comaundement* — comaundementȝ
leest isle—last Ile
2120 *hyȝt*—hyhte
2121 *puten*—putten
derk[e]—dyrke
2122 *oute*—owt
2124 *foule*—fowl
2125 *whiche*—whych
2126 *maker*—makere
cried[e]—cryde
2127 *he*—she
2128 *sweller*—swellere
2129 *many[e]*—manye
had—MS. hadde, C. had
2129 *fals[e]*—false
2130 *fouler*—fowlere
2131 *þen*—thanne
þilk[e]—thylke
2133 *or*—of
2134 *haþ*—MS. haþe
þilk—thylke

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